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KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

CASE STUDY

Association Learns to Cooperate

Community-driven health initiatives are developing primary health care and improving rural health.



Khudoikulov Sulaimankul and his neighbors at the reconstructed over pass in Leilek, Batken Oblast. Photo: WUASP

I would like to thank the US people for the provided help. The flood over pass controls floods, prevents water losses and ensures irrigation of 53 hectares of land. Before the construction, and the bridge construction has made it much easier to pass over the canal."

- 75-year-old farmer Khudoikulov Sulaimankul.

Challenge

Most of the irrigated land owned by water users association Omur-Suu in Leilek, Batken Oblast, lies within the glacial outwash plain. Each year, floods clog or wash away irrigation canal inlets and constantly threaten to wash away the villagers' fields. Farm land is protected by levees, but maintaining them is difficult. Without flood control structures and equipment to clean canals or open canal inlets, the amount of irrigated land was shrinking every year. "We had to clean this site every time it rained," says Khudoikulov Sulaimankul, a 75-year-old farmer. Feeling helpless about their situation, each year farmers sank into endless conflicts over water. No one took the initiative to organize the farmers to help themselves, and their irrigation system continued to fall apart.

Initiative

In April 2007, the USAID water user associations support project and OSCE started cooperation with Omur-Suu association. WUASP mobilized farmers and trained them in management of their association and water distribution, helping farmers realize the importance of their cooperation. To protect Omur-Suu's land from floods, USAID and OSCE helped the association build a flood overpass for the main canal, central water distribution point, eight water gates, and three outlets. The USAID program funded equipment and rehabilitation of the association's office donated by the local government, and provided a backhoe loader for maintaining their on-farm canals and levees. Association members contributed labor for the construction works.

Results

Water conflicts are now few because of the improved water delivery systems along with better water management. The association brought back into production 116 hectares of land that had been previously lost to floods, and irrigates 696 hectares of land benefiting 5,000 villagers. The rehabilitated canals prevent water losses and control floods ensuring stable water delivery for crops. Farmers learned to make transparent decisions and to manage the operations, funds, and resources of their association in a transparent and democratic manner. "The constructed water gates safely deliver water to my small land helping to harvest a good yield to feed my family, says Kobilova Gavkhar, a 45-year-old mother of 5 children. "Previously, water caused a lot of inconveniences for us. Our life has notably improved thanks to the USAID support."